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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 007870

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SUBJECT: FS MENON TELLS USDP EDELMAN INDIA WILL EMPOWER
KARZAI, WAIT FOR NEW GOVT. IN BANGLADESH

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Classified By: Ambassador David Mulford for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: In a 15 November meeting with Foreign
Secretary Shivshankar Menon, visiting Under Secretary of

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Defense for Policy, Eric Edelman, outlined the reorganization of the Department of Defense (DOD) Policy Office, noting the addition of an Assistant Secretary for all Asia including East Asia, Central Asia and South Asia. He stressed that DoD would continue to build the strategic relationship on the basis of the Framework agreed to by Secretary Rumsfeld and Defense Minister Mukherjee. He emphasized that the new A/S position would allow more frequent discussions between meetings of the Defense Policy Group (DPG), and the Defense Procurement and Production Group (DPPG), and "augment the meetings with other global experts as the situation dictates." When pressed by U/S Edelman to contribute more to increase the governing capacity of the Government of Afghanistan, FS Menon averred that the GOI will continue to do everything possible to "empower Karzai," and work out Indian sub-contactors' problems with their Japanese counterparts to ensure that the Ring Road is completed. Menon said that the GOI was very concerned about Pakistan's Waziristan agreement and "especially worried when we hear talk of Waziristan being a good example." U/S Edelman said

that the U.S. understood GOI worries and had shared its own concerns about the Waziristan agreement with Pakistani officials. Focusing on Bangladesh, FS Menon concurred with Ambassador Edelman's concern that Bangladesh might become a potential haven for extremism, observed that the caretaker government "wants to stay as long as it can," and opined that demonstrations "may provide the caretaker government with an excuse to call in the army." He further declared that the GOI is "waiting for a stable and permanent government to deal with." He privately asked that the U.S. use its influence with the Bangladeshi military to urge it to stay out of politics.⁸ Turning to Nepal, Ambassador Edelman asked if the GOI believed the current situation favors the Maoists. FS Menon responded that he believed that the Maoists had lost ground since April, but the first priority was to ensure that the Maoists give up their weapons prior to participating in the interim government. FS Menon noted that the civilian police suffers from armed infiltration, and the GOI was quietly seeking ways to build up the more trustworthy army police before the election. END SUMMARY.

----- Addressing DPG-DPPG issues in a broader context -----

2.(C) U/S Edelman explained the restructuring of the DOD Policy Office. The overarching goal is to properly address the National Strategy as reflected in the Quadrennial Defense Reviews of 2002 and 2005, incorporating the emergence of Asia in general and India particularly. U/S Edelman commented that the Assistant Secretary will have responsibility for all of Asia", and noted that the scope includes Afghanistan, and the Central Asian Republics. He also proposed that the new Assistant Secretary head a Defense Joint Working Group that would meet between the sessions of the DPG. FS Menon stated the GOI is in favor of the plan in principle. He requested that the USG provide more specifics in order to identify the right people within GOI. He affirmed that the GOI would find proper Indian representatives.

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----- GOI needs to facilitate cooperation between Indian and Japanese companies to complete the Ring Road -----

3.(C) U/S Edelman said that the USG was aware of GOI concerns about increased Taliban activity in Afghanistan. He noted that NATO has increased its forces (including 12,000 Americans) as the ISAF Command has been extended throughout the country. In addition, there are approximately 12,000 troops performing other work outside the ISAF framework, and the U.S. will be increasing its level of effort in training the Afghan police and army. U/S Edelman seized upon FS Menon's statement that the GOI, "is committed to do whatever it can to help Afghanistan," and said that, "the single biggest contribution of the government of India would be getting Indian sub-contractors to help their Japanese counterparts complete the Ring Road." In addition, the GOI could assist Afghanistan in building governing capacity and "training the trainers and teaching the teachers." FS Menon proffered that the GOI planned to meet with the Japanese at the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference 18-20 November in Delhi and, "will work hard on solving the problems with the Japanese," regarding the Ring Road construction. FS Menon also declared that the GOI wants to focus on empowering Karzai and "will work to strengthen Afghanistan politically and economically."

----- GOI worried about false impression of the Waziristan "success story" -----

4.(C) Returning to the current military situation in Afghanistan, FS Menon claimed that the GOI is especially worried when, "we hear talk of Waziristan being a good example," and highlighted the GOI's primary concern with activity along the Durand Line and Indus Valley, "especially places like Waziristan and Musa Qala." U/S Edelman commented that the USG understands GOI concerns regarding cross border

problems. The USG was also concerned about the N. Waziristan agreement and had expressed its concerns to the Government of Pakistan. Pointing to the recent bombings in Bajaur, the U/S observed the Pakistan army may also come to question the value of the N. Waziristan agreement.

----- Bangladesh: The danger in creating "an attractive nuisance." -----

5.(C) Reflecting on Bangladesh, U/S Edelman warned that it may become a potential haven for extremism. FS Menon agreed that, "it's getting close." Referring to the recent demonstrations and strikes, FS Menon noted that the caretaker government wanted to retain power as long as possible and may use demonstrations and ensuing violence as an excuse to call in the armed forces and remain in power. F/S Menon cautioned that a tenure longer than two months for the caretaker government is "a concern" and that the first priority must be free and fair elections as soon as possible.

He noted that the GOI needs to wait for a stable government in Bangladesh before anything can be done. However, he offered some optimism that, "It is not a fundamentally extremist society, but the combination of politics and Islam is always the problem." NOTE: After the meeting Menon

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instructed an MEA official to convey to U/S Edelman India's hopes that the USG will exercise some influence over the Bangladesh Army and urge it to stay out of the electoral fray. END NOTE.

----- Nepal: "The best weapon is peace and prosperity" -----

6.(C) Turning to Nepal, U/S Edelman expressed concern that the Maoists had recently gained the political upper hand. FS Menon responded that although the King's dismissive approach has encouraged the Maoists, since April they appeared to be losing support. He commended President Koirala for embracing a political process of inclusion that "revealed the Maoists for what they really are, extortionists." According to Menon, "That is why the Maoists delayed the seven party talks and entrance into the political mainstream." The FS declared that the Maoists surely have bad intentions, but their timetable was unclear. He underlined that the number one priority in Nepal is the separation of the Maoists from their weapons prior to their participation in an interim government and to "provide Nepal with the means to govern outside of Kathmandu--and it won't be the army." He confided that India is, "working quietly to strengthen the army police prior to the election, as the civilian police force may have armed infiltration." The F/S appealed to the U/S to continue to work closely with the GOI on Nepal despite some differences in opinion. He remarked, "It's not easy, but we got this far. No one would have believed it ten months ago."

17. (U) U/S Edelman cleared this message.

MULFORD